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# THE VALUE OF THE SOCIAL SURVEY FOR RELIGION

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The recent social survey of Peking is a valuable study of the economic, political, educational, and social conditions in this great Chinese city, and supplies precisely the information needed by missionary enterprises for the effective planning of their work.

This survey is the last of a significant series, starting with the Pittsburgh Survey in 1907. A brief account of the rapidly extending use of the survey is given, and the value of this method of exploration for the church is set forth.

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## I

A notable example of the service which can be rendered by an organized survey of a community is found in a recent study of a Chinese city.<sup>1</sup> To make a survey of Peking is necessarily a large undertaking, since Peking is an ancient city with above 800,000 population. The work of the surveyors was rendered unusually difficult because of language barriers, popular prejudices and customs, and the imperfect state of Chinese statistics, which a much larger staff of surveyors could not have made good in the time allotted to the study. The question will arise in the mind of the reader whether it might not have been wiser to have confined the investigation to certain aspects of the city's life, selecting either from the point of view of the contacts of Western civilization, especially religious contacts, or from the point of view of the new China; selecting possibly where the two movements most coincide, as for example, education, religious institutions and poverty, with its corrective social agencies.

But upon reflection I think that the scientific surveyor will conclude that the plan finally adopted was most desirable

<sup>1</sup> *Peking: A Social Survey.* Sidney D. Gamble, assisted by John Stewart Burgess. New York: Doran, 1921. vii+538 pages. \$5.00.

and that the survey itself is well done, informing, and stimulating. It is in reality a notable pathfinder study, under competent direction, of a city having extraordinary interest to the rest of the world. It offers just the kind of information, so far as it goes, as is necessary to the creative forces of the new China, and to missionaries, educators, and social workers. The survey brings out the essential soundness of Chinese life, but also lays bare its dangers and deficiencies, especially the need of accurate public statistics. The survey will also prove valuable to another group—tourists, commercial representatives, and official visitors. A better introduction for one going to China, to be read on the outward voyage, could not at the present time be secured.

To one not closely familiar with Chinese life, the survey brings out absorbingly interesting fact material as to the historic life and institutions of the capital and the tendencies which are at work transforming the nation. An empire is becoming a democracy; a loosely knit grouping of provinces is being welded together; a highly developed system of trade guilds is feeling the pressure of Western industrial methods; ancient systems of education and medicine are rapidly giving place to modern education and scientific medicine. The survey reveals “crying social needs, vast ignorance, appalling poverty and a striking lack of wholesome recreation.” Two constructive forces face these problems: “the Renaissance or New Thought Movement among the educated classes, and Protestant Christianity reaching all classes; and both of these movements have taken an interest in practical community service enterprises. The Renaissance Movement, whose motto is ‘Save the Country through Science and Democracy’ has concentrated the attention of the thinking young men of China on social questions.” It is the judgment of the surveyors that the next important step in the development of Christian effort in China will be in the application of Christian principles to the social life of the people.

Municipal administration in Peking, as pictured by the survey, is a complicated and confusing structure in which national and municipal jurisdictions have independent authority. The city is primarily a capital and secondarily an independent community. The Municipal Council and Police Board are responsible to the Department of the Interior. The powers of the various boards are based upon custom rather than law. The police, singularly efficient, not only regulate traffic and arrest criminals, but discharge the duties of the Board of Health, the Fire and Street Cleaning Departments, and the Census Bureau. In addition the force regulates prostitutes, has control of two hospitals, the insane asylum, industrial schools, reform schools, and rescue homes for prostitutes. They have opened fifty-three half-day schools in various parts of the city for the children of the poor, money being supplied in part by philanthropic citizens.

The chapter on "population" is an interesting study of the historical growth of the city from ancient times, and vicissitudes of wars, dynasties, destructions, rebuilding and mingling of races; these expressing themselves in the various walled areas and population districts of the city. The population by races is roughly: Chinese 70-75 per cent, Manchu 20-25 per cent, Mohammedan 3 per cent, Mongol 1.2 per cent, others 0.5 per cent; 515,535 are males, 296,921 females, the preponderance of men being due mainly to the presence of public officials, political aspirants, and students. Americans are the largest group of foreigners in Peking next to the Japanese, but the total foreign population is very small.

Peking is revealed by the survey as the educational center of China. Within its walls are the University of the National Government, the National Teachers' College, the Higher Technological School, and 16,879 students in middle and higher grade schools. Forty-eight thousand men and boys are in the schools of the city and but 7,000 women. These figures indicate the low status of woman, which is reflected also in

her inferior place in the home, and the disproportionate number of women who commit suicide to end their wretchedness. The great missions, Catholic, Greek Catholic, and Protestants, maintain 110 schools of all grades from the kindergarten to the university. In the mission middle and higher schools there are 3,789 men and boys and 2,118 women and girls, showing the leveling up of Christian ideals, as compared with the number of women students in the native schools. One-third of the female students of the city are in mission schools. The Union Medical School, lately endowed and rebuilt by the Rockefeller Foundation at a cost of \$7,000,000, had in 1919, 40 male and 3 female students, but is destined under its new facilities to exert a preponderating influence on the science and practice of medicine in China. The educational ideals of the National Board of Education aim at the systematic development of the child physically, intellectually, and morally; but actual conditions are as yet far short of realizing these ideals, due to lack of trained teachers and proper equipment.

One of the most valuable chapters of the survey is that which deals with the commercial life of the city. Commercial and labor guilds, each representing an industry, but including all those engaged in that line, employers and employees, are the basis of the industrial organization of Peking. The comment of the survey is that, "With their rules and regulations, close membership and the requirements which most of them have, of a three-year apprenticeship before a man is eligible to join, the guilds have maintained a fairly static industrial situation. Ordinarily they have not, according to Western ideals, made progress. . . . The power of the group is so strong that the individual must conform. . . . Labor has practically no mobility. . . . The Chinese have come to believe in combination and in the maintenance of the status quo rather than competition." Guilds have existed in China for 2,000 years. They grew out of the hardships of fluctuation

in industries in a land where the masses live close to starvation. "The Chinese feel that the cost of competition is too high. They combine rather than compete. They have developed the guild organization so that they may be protected from each other, and that business organizations may be stabilized, be the same for all and be maintained in spite of outside influence." Nevertheless, the fact that the guild system in China has made for static conditions and immobility, and that it is weakening in the presence of Western industrial organization, throws an unfavorable light, or at least a questioning light, upon the Western movement toward guild socialism.

Since 1900, chambers of commerce have been organized in many Chinese cities. The influential men and directors of the Peking Chamber are all representatives of the guilds, though ordinary merchants are admitted to membership. The Chamber has taken over many of the functions common to all the guilds. The guilds and chambers have established extra legal courts whose decisions are binding upon their members when accepted by the interested parties, and are decided according to the customs prevailing in each locality. Peking is a large banking center, but factories are kept outside the walls by the use of the taxing power.

The social evil in Peking is one of the dark pictures of the survey. It reveals a condition not greatly different from that in Japan. The city has a segregated district with 377 brothels and 3,135 registered prostitutes. Venereal infection is spreading, and the harmful effect of fast life and the keeping of several wives is becoming apparent. The surveyors rightly insist that in forming an estimate of the evil, one must keep in mind the low position of Chinese women, the lack of wholesome social recreation, the conditions in the Chinese clan home, the new spirit of freedom which has broken old restraints, and the fact that sixty-five per cent of the city's population are male. Economic pressure often causes parents to sell their

daughters to brothels, or to wealthy men as concubines. Throughout the survey the low status of women is a depressing and distressing exhibit.

The section on Poverty and Philanthropy is depressing, but hopeful in that the ideals of modern social work are getting a start. Next to ignorance, poverty is the most serious of the Peking problems. A Chinese family of five of the working-class can be self-supporting on an income of \$100, silver, a year; but, even so, the police list 11.95 per cent of the population as poor or very poor. Many families go through the winter without warm clothes. In a study of the budget of 195 Chinese and Manchu families in one of the Military Guard districts, the incomes ranged from \$30 to \$269 a year. The amount spent for food ranged from 68 to 83 per cent. The families averaged from 2.5 to 4.5 persons. Rents averaged from \$5 to \$15 a year. Fuel sufficient to keep from freezing cost \$6 a year. The maximum for clothing for a family of 5.1 persons was \$11.50. The Chinese families of the group studied spent from 1.3 to 6.6 per cent of the income on books, education, recreation, insurance, savings, and miscellaneous—a dangerously low percentage. The regulation diet consisted of two meals a day of corn bread and turnips. Houses are one story and usually one room. This is an inconceivably low standard of living, and it is not surprising that the beggars are organized in a guild.

The police have established thirteen relief centers and provide as high as 700,000 free meals in a month. No effort is made to determine who are worthy or to give remedial treatment. Since the establishment of the Republic the police have taken over practically all charitable institutions, including hospitals and prisons. Peking has two private orphanages, but they seem to have no child placement, and they appear to subordinate education to work. Private philanthropy is doing only a minimum of work. It is evident that the entire system for the care of the neglected, dependent, and

delinquent of the population has yet to be modernized and developed.

The final third of the survey is devoted to the study of the religious life of the city, including China's ancient religions, and the Catholic, Greek Catholic and Protestant faiths. The city as portrayed by the survey is dotted with ancient temples and shrines and modern chapels and churches. Confucian, Taoist, and Buddhist places of worship number 936 within the walls. The temple of Confucius is the second great shrine of Confucianism in China. Peking is a theological training center for the Mohammedans, who number 30,000 adherents in the city, is the principal Roman Catholic center in China, almost the sole center of the Russian Orthodox Mission, and is one of the most important educational and evangelistic centers for the Protestant churches. The survey has not made an intensive study of these religious activities, not even of the protestant churches, but has attempted by means of statistics and the description of the more outstanding institutions to give an idea of the work that is being done in the city.

On the whole the picture of the results of Christian effort in the capital is both encouraging and discouraging. The Catholics have been at work in Peking since 1293, yet they number but 9,744 adherents; the Russian Orthodox since 1685, yet they have but seven churches; the Protestants since 1861, yet they have but 5,000 adherents. The Mohammedans have double the number of adherents in all branches of the Christian church. The great ancient faiths, exclusive of Christians and Mohammedans, have 95 per cent of the people.

The bright side of the picture is the disproportionate influence of the missions and of Christian ideals in the new life which is revolutionizing China. This is not coming out of Mohammedan teaching, nor out of the ancient faiths, but from men educated in the missions and from Europe and America. The survey finds, however, that "Foreigners can-

not evangelize China, any more than they can educate her or cure her diseases. This work must be done by the Chinese themselves, and the most and the best that the foreigner can do is to develop Chinese who will carry on the work."

The survey closes with an intensive study of the American Board Mission, which consists of a central church and two chapels, with a total of 325 families. The questions on which light was desired were two: Who are the people that the church is reaching? And what can be expected of these people in service and financial support? Of the families studied, 62 per cent were Chinese, 35 per cent Manchus, and 3 per cent Mongols. The Chinese and Manchu families averaged 3.7 persons, the Mongols 6. This reveals a relatively higher percentage of Manchu converts. The percentages of males and females are almost equal, strikingly different from that of the city, where 65 per cent are males. The death-rate is 5 per cent lower than that of the city. The income of the church families varied from less than \$100 to over \$1,000. Of the 325 families studied, 22 received more than \$1,000; 27 received from \$500 to \$999; 56 from \$250 to \$499; while approximately 100 received less than \$100. The Chinese families were distinctly better off than the Manchus. Twenty-two per cent of the church families owned their homes. The usual work-day was eight hours or less, only 8 per cent working ten or twelve hours. Sixty-seven per cent can read and 26 per cent of the families subscribe for newspapers. The favorite amusements recorded were music, reading, and singing, but also gardening, tennis, basket-ball, and other forms of exercising. Sixty per cent of the members of these families are connected with churches, of which 54 per cent are men. Sixty-one per cent of those who belong to the churches attend regularly. The percentage of those who contribute is still less. Thirty-four per cent are in Sunday school. Only 76 persons, or 12 per cent of those who belong to the church, are giving any kind of service.

The surveyors' comment is that answers to questionnaires indicate no evidence that the members connect social service with religion, but that their religious service means wholly going to church, teaching, or preaching. They consider that the findings indicate the possibility of self-support and of a great enlargement of the value and scope of Christian service, but that these depend upon a reorganization of the program of teaching and service by the missions. "The old methods of work," they conclude, "are not satisfactory and must be changed, and outside help is needed in developing new plans and adapting the experience of other countries to Chinese life. The Mission forces ought to give this assistance, both because of the contribution they can make to Chinese life, and because of the development that it will bring to the life of the church."

These findings give cause for serious thought, both on the field and in the mission boards and training schools at home. The Y.M.C.A., and especially the Princeton center, was a significant influence in instigating the survey and carrying it forward. One could wish that the missions themselves would undertake the intensive and more limited studies as to scope which should follow the present survey.

## II

This recent and valuable study of the Chinese capital brings out strikingly the extension and use of the survey as an approach to religious and social problems, in that its most recent application comes from the Orient. The impression is reinforced by the simultaneous appearance of the digest of the survey of Prague ("Pathfinding in Prague," by Ruth Crawford), which was published by the *Survey* on June 11, 1921, the announcement of the as yet unpublished Pathfinder Survey of Constantinople, under the directorship of Professor Clarence Richard Johnson, of the faculty of Robert College, and a survey of Smyrna, in Asiatic Greece, about which details are as yet lacking.

It is difficult to realize, in the light of these surveys, that the first real social survey, the Pittsburgh Survey, was finished as late as 1907, and therefore that this application of the scientific method to the discovery and interpretation of social facts, began but fifteen years ago. Fortunately, the survey of Pittsburgh was a monumental work, carried out with remarkable foresight and efficiency. It immediately established a method and set high standards which have been of the greatest importance to all subsequent community studies.

For three years after the Pittsburgh Survey, no new community surveys were made. Other cities hesitated to undertake a self-examination which might reveal conditions such as those brought to light in Pittsburgh, that might give the community a black eye in the sight of its neighbors. But the value of the method was so manifest and so fundamental to any serious community reconstruction, that the tide turned. Requests for assistance and guidance which came to the editor of the *Survey* magazine, who had directed the Pittsburgh Survey, were so numerous that it became necessary to establish a bureau. This was undertaken by the Russell Sage Foundation, and Mr. Shelby Harrison, originally on the staff of the Pittsburgh Survey, was taken from the editorial staff of the *Survey* magazine and made director of the new Department of Surveys and Exhibits. The number of surveys, big and little, increased so rapidly after 1912, that by December, 1915, when the first complete bibliography was issued, it included 273 items. But this was not a circumstance to what has followed in the last six years. A new bibliography which is to be issued shortly will contain above 2,000 items!

The significance of the survey as a method is indicated also by the extent to which it is being used by different organizations: not only communities and churches, but industries, governments, municipal administrations, chambers of commerce, and schools and agencies at work in the field of mental hygiene, housing, public health, vice, charities, race

relationships, and international problems. The Departments of Agriculture, Labor and Commerce, at Washington, have made notable studies to guide legislation and administrative action by the federal government. The reports of the Children's Bureau under Miss Lathrop, the study of labor representation by the Shipping Board and the surveys directed by Dr. Galpin, of the Department of Agriculture, are illustrations of the method.

These facts indicate that the social survey is a revolutionary departure. One does not exaggerate in saying that in the survey humanity has achieved a method which is comparable in its importance to social progress with the invention of the steam engine to industry. It is rapidly changing the entire fabric of social effort, and is as certain also to transform and immensely to strengthen the methods and work of the churches.

The value of the survey was quickly realized by the churches, and first by the Department of Church and Country Life of the Presbyterian Church in the United States. The ominous silence of three years which followed the Pittsburgh Survey was broken in 1910, by a survey made of the parish of the Labor Church in New York City by Rev. Charles Stelzle. On the basis of this study the permanent features of the work were established. The survey revealed a dense labor population, heavily Jewish and Italian, radical in temperament and accustomed to the forum method by the Cooper Union. These facts, now sometimes forgotten or misunderstood, led to a reorganization of the methods of the church. The Labor Church survey was followed by a series of rural surveys, which, although not intensive, were stimulating and instructive: in 1911, Indiana and Tennessee; 1912-13, Southwestern Ohio country churches of distinction, and a rural survey in Arkansas; 1915, a rural survey of Tulare County, California; 1916, Lake County, Oregon, and Marin and Sonoma counties, California.

The significance of the method was at once realized and the imagination of the church was stirred. Other boards began to undertake rural surveys and many pastors made intensive studies of their parishes, charting their material as best they knew how and doing more or less effective programizing on the basis of their findings. The volume of church surveys, rural, urban, and by parishes, grew rapidly until 1917, when the Methodist Episcopal church, which had forged ahead in the use of the survey method, decided upon the Centenary Movement, and as the basis of this great undertaking, made an unprecedented and phenomenal survey of its entire field at home and abroad, and on the findings of the survey outlined a new program of action and formulated an unprecedented budget. The Centenary survey could not be intensive. It was, in fact, a mammoth pathfinder study, but was made with intelligence and courage, so that it succeeded and pointed the way to the Interchurch World Movement.

No survey ever undertaken, except the Methodist Centenary, has approached the magnitude of that which underlay the plans for the Interchurch World Movement. That amazing organization set out to survey the home land and also mission lands, to discover the needs of communities and nations, to formulate programs of enlarged action, to draw the independent forces of Protestantism together, and to create a vastly enlarged budget. The necessary organization assumed vast proportions. The headquarters' organization alone spread over New York in the neighborhood of Madison Square, and expenses mounted into millions. Had there been more time for development and had the slump which followed the first prosperity after the war been delayed for another year, it would probably have succeeded. The movement got far enough, however, to lift the churches to a new basis of enlarged service, and to reveal a body of information which is rapidly transforming the Protestant work of the United States. The churches understand now, as they did not before the Inter-

church World Movement, that denominational competition is not only wasteful but self-destructive, and they are proceeding throughout the land to do away with this waste as fast as it can be done under conditions in the field.

We have now come to a time where the possible scope of the survey as applied to religious work is apparent from actual surveys. In rural fields there are surveys of states, sections of states, counties, and local parishes; and surveys of logging camps, harvesters, cannery villages, and other migrants. In cities there are surveys of the religious life of entire communities, such as Pittsburgh, Cleveland, and St. Louis; surveys of areas, problems, population groups, and local church parishes; surveys looking to the establishment or enlargement of institutions, such as hospitals, schools, settlements, good will industries, and the like. In short it is now realized that no important undertaking should be begun without a preliminary survey.

The church has also acquired the method of the survey, although as yet its practice of the method is indifferently good. But it is comforting to remember that the survey itself, although it has increased by leaps and bounds, to quote from Mr. Shelby Harrison, "can hardly be said to have gone very far beyond the experimental stage. Much remains to be learned as to the best methods to be employed in using it, and as to the place it should take among many kinds of effort to be called into play in working for better conditions of living."

At present the greatest weakness of the survey lies in the education of the public as to the facts discovered and their meaning, the program of social action which should grow out of the findings, and the organization of the forces of a community to carry out the program. The Springfield Survey gave great attention to newspaper releases, to the interpretation and digesting of reports for the press, to graphic displays through exhibits, and to the publication of reports. The director of the survey set out in the beginning to bring as

many citizens as possible into the making of the survey, in order that, when it should be over, there should be a strong body of interested citizens ready to carry its recommendations into effect.

The importance of church surveys in the following fields should be emphasized: in the locating of new churches and in reorganizing local churches; in starting new colleges, orphanages, hospitals, old folks' homes, settlements, and other social agencies, in order to avoid the creation of unnecessary institutions, and in order to build rightly and adequately; in the discovery of neglected areas and social groups; in resurveying the religious life of cities and their social conditions, in so far as these lie within the scope of the churches.

No church surveys are of such vital importance as those of entire communities, for in no other way is it possible to know the real problems which the churches face and the actual status of their work; or to eliminate the waste of unnecessary competition in buildings, personnel, upkeep, and administrative organizations; or to bring out the united power of the churches for religious education, evangelism, and community service; or to establish systematically, through comity, strong non-competitive religious centers in crowded areas; or to develop co-operatively needed social agencies, such as hospitals, homes for the aged, and child-caring institutions. The strength of the Protestant churches is so great that, given the survey and a co-operative program, it is possible in the course of one or two decades, to create in most cities an organization equal to the needs revealed by the survey. If this is not done, the outlook for Protestantism in American cities is not hopeful. No one denomination can face the need of a community by itself. Whenever it attempts to do so, it is discredited. The result is inadequacy, baffling overlapping of work, small centers which cannot command their neighborhoods, public apathy, a subtle discrediting of religion, and a waste of money and human energy which is like the waste of fever.

A notable community survey of St. Louis has just been completed by the National Committee on Social and Religious Surveys. Its findings, which will soon appear in book form, offer to the churches of that city for the first time an intelligent and inspiring program. The published survey will reveal also the value of such studies to the churches of other cities. The associate director of the Committee on Social and Religious Surveys commenting on the St. Louis Survey, sums up the meaning of the survey as follows:

The correlation and co-ordination of all facts gathered by a survey, both on a community and citywide basis, show the concrete detailed united task and opportunity of Protestantism in any city, identifying it and classifying it according to geographic areas in their variations according to their denominational needs and opportunities, according to social conditions and legislation, and according to opportunities for moral and spiritual leadership as expressed through various publicity channels.

In concluding, attention should be called to the use of the survey by officials of denominations, working co-operatively, for two important objectives: the religious and social welfare of industrial and immigrant populations, especially in the crowded areas of large cities, and the adventurous care of isolated groups of the population. As to the first, the church has now a great opportunity. The confidence of labor has turned anew to the church since the Interchurch reports on the Steel Strike of 1919, and the industrial policy of the Federal Council of Churches and its allied denominations. This change of attitude has been worth all the controversy which has raged about these bodies since the summer of 1919. The first great work of the church in relation to labor must always be the religious care and social welfare of working men's families in the neighborhoods where they live. The type of church needed is a powerful institutional center, providing for worship, religious education, and social center activities, and a staff understanding economics as well as theology. To provide such

non-competitive centers requires a survey of the crowded areas of all our cities. Such studies are best made when they form a part of a community-wide survey, as in St. Louis.

As to the second, a beginning was made by the Interchurch World Movement in the study of migrant groups. They consist, for example, of the loggers far up the valleys of the Pacific Coast mountains and the Appalachian Mountains of the South; the harvesters who follow the advancing ripening grain from the Gulf states to the Canadian prairies; the women and children who throng to the canneries during the summer months; the boathouse people of our large inland rivers; pockets of population here and there, as on the seaboards of Virginia and the Carolinas, where the people have been caught in backward eddies; hardy settlers in out-of-the-way places of the great Rocky Mountain country. The church has sadly neglected these groups, in fact has scarcely known about them until of late. I have personally studied the loggers of the North, of the Northwest, and of the South, and I know how great is the need and how fascinating the possibilities for service which lie awaiting a true Church of the Lost Sheep. But the work can only follow the survey.